A WAYSIDE ALTAR

JAMES BUCKHAM

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A Wayside Altar.

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A Collection of Poems

BY

James Buckham

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Here, by Life's Path, where toilers pass,
All stained and footsore, day by day,
Lord, grant me grace to build, I pray,
An altar in the wayside grass.

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Service.

Ah, grand is the world's work, and noble, forsooth,
The doing one's part, be it ever so small!
You, reaping with Boaz, I, gleaning with Ruth,
Are honored by serving, yet servants of all.

No drudge in his corner but speeds the world's wheels;
No serf in the field but is sowing God's seed—
More noble, I think, in the dust though he kneels,
Than the pauper of wealth, who makes scorn of the deed.

Is toil but a treadmill? Think not of the grind,
But think of the grist, what is done and to do,
The world growing better, more like to God's mind,
By long, faithful labor of helpers like you.

The broom or the spade or the shuttle, that plies
Its own honest task in its own honest way,
Serves heaven not less than a star in the skies—
What more could the Pleiades do than obey?

The Daily Task.

I THANK Thee, O Thou Love divine,
For this familiar task of mine,
This humble service which I pay
Out of my heart and strength, each day.

Sometimes the toil may irksome seem;
Sometimes, perchance, I pause to dream
Of grander work—yet not for long;
"My task for me," is still my song.

Long since I learned that wholesome truth—
The heritage of age to youth—
That calm content and patient strife
Bring surest inward peace to life.

To do what God appoints; to bend
All soul, all strength, to that one end;
To bear in love our burden's stress—
Ah! this is life's true happiness!

The Flower on the Wall.

THE garden is red with the pride of the rose,
And white as the angels the lilies unclose—
All exquisite fragrances, daintily blown,
All marvels of form, for the master alone!

But, down by the wall, God's sweet heart in a vine
Creeps up by the stones of this 'closure of thine,
O master, and hangs on the edge of the wall
Its white cup of kindness and pity for all.

The world may be selfish, but God 's in it still,
The sweet of His love in its bitterest ill,
His heart of compassion man can not enthrall;
It climbs by the stones, and it flow'rs on the wall.

O Infinite Tenderness, seeking for aye
To lead out man's heart by love's beautiful way;
O'erfilling our lives, whether conscious or no,
With blossoms that gladden our brothers below;

Help us so to welcome that purpose divine,
To share in our souls that sweet spirit of Thine,
That ever, as thou bendest over us all,
The flow'rs we most cherish may bloom on the wall!

The Lesser Ministries.

A FLOWER upon my threshold laid,
  A little kindness wrought unseen;
I know not who love's tribute paid,
I only know that it has made
  Life's pathway smooth, life's borders green.

God bless the gracious hands that e'er
  Such tender ministries essay!
Dear hands that help the pilgrim bear
His load of weariness and care
  More bravely up the toilsome way.

Oh, what a little thing can turn
  A heavy heart from sighs to song!
A smile can make the world less stern;
A word can cause the soul to burn
  With glow of heaven all night long!

It needs not that love's gift be great—
  Some splendid jewel of the soul
For which a king might supplicate.
Nay! true love's least, at love's true rate,
  Is tithe most royal of the whole.

Love's Silences.

Not to the lips of friendship rise
Its deepest, holiest sympathies.
That sweeter, subtler tenderness,
Sometimes, the longing heart must guess.
It bides in touch and tone and eye,
The yearning smile, the half-heard sigh.
When faith gropes down to spirit-deeps
Love its expectant silence keeps.

When by Grief's drooping form we stand,
We touch the lips, we press the hand.
No word doth love essay to speak,
For every word is cold and weak.
Only that spiritual sympathy
Can any deep, true comfort be.
Ah! when a soul is in the deeps
Love its most sacred silence keeps!

How prone upon the empty air
Are we to speak the formal prayer!
But when in agony we raise
Our blind eyes to the Father's face;
When for our dearest in their need
With all our burdened souls we plead,
The prayer from heart to heaven leaps,
And love a holy silence keeps.

Love is so quick to understand
The human glance and tone and hand!
There is a finer, subtler speech
Than any form of words can teach.
True eloquence of joy or woe
Hath been, and ever shall be so.
Yea, if the soul exults or weeps,
Love its deep-answering silence keeps!

The Land of the Little Faces.

I WONDER, oh I wonder, where the little faces go,
That come, and smile, and stay awhile, and pass like flakes of snow—
The dear, wee baby faces that the world has never known,
But mothers hide, so tender-eyed, deep in their hearts alone.

I love to think that somewhere, in the country we call heaven,
The land most fair of anywhere will unto them be given,
A land of little faces—very little, very fair—
And every one shall know her own and cleave unto it there.

O grant it, loving Father, to the broken hearts that plead!
Thy way is best—yet oh! to rest in perfect faith indeed!
To know that we shall find them, even them, the wee, white dead,
At Thy right hand, in Thy bright land, by living waters led!

Love and Life.

Ah, not ourselves alone
Doth it concern if life be bread or stone!
What subtle, bitter heartaches do they know,
Our loved ones, when the tares of sin we sow;
What hidden pain doth steal away their rest,
Because we fail to be, and do, our best!

Not to each child, as one
Apart, God giveth life beneath the sun.
Nay, I must share this heritage of mine
With near and dear—so runs the law divine.
What if I waste, yet feel no pangs, no fears?
Shall I not sometime suffer for love's tears?

Love Tells Me So.

A LIFE of baffled toil goes down;
But God, who heeds not fortune's frown,
That life shall crown.
How do I know?
Love tells me so!

A heart is broken like a reed;
But God shall stoop unto its need,
And heal indeed.
How do I know?
Love tells me so!

For him who hath or pain or care
The night must pass, and, here or there,
The morn rise fair.
How do I know?
Love tells me so!

The Judgment Day.

WHAT is thy thought of the Judgment-day?
Fixed time, fixed place, and a vast array
Of souls released from their bonds of clay?
Twelve hours of fiat—or twenty-four—
For a million million souls or more?

This is my thought of the Judgment-time:
An æon's sweep for the day sublime;
A universe for the Judge's seat;
Each soul alone at its Father's feet,
Nor suffered thence till it stands complete.

"How Beautiful To Be With God!" *

How BEAUTIFUL to be with God
When earth is fading like a dream,
And from this mist-encircled shore
We launch upon the unknown stream!
No doubt, no fear, no anxious care,
But, comforted by staff and rod,
In the faith-brightened hour of death
How beautiful to be with God!

How sweet to lay the burden by,
The task inwrought with toil and prayer,
Assured that He who calls will send
Another still the yoke to bear.
What peace, when we have done our best,
To leave the pilgrim path, long trod,
And in yon fields of asphodel,
Snow-white, be evermore with God!

Beyond the partings and the pains,
Beyond the sighing and the tears,
Oh! beautiful to be with God
Through all the endless, blessed years;

* These were the last words of Miss Frances E. Willard, who saw the King in His beauty, February 17, 1898.

To see His face, to hear His voice,
To know Him better day by day,
And love Him as the flowers love light,
And serve Him as immortals may.

Then let it fade, this dream of earth,
When I have done my life work here,
Or long, or short, as seemeth best—
What matters, so God's will appear?
I will not fear to launch my bark
Upon the darkly rolling flood.
'T is but to pierce the mist—and then
How beautiful to be with God!

The Higher Faith.

O God, the path of grief has been
  My way of guidance unto Thee;
And still, through clouds that shut me in,
  I follow, though I cannot see.

Or tears or sunshine, as Thou wilt,
  Or joy or pain, or ease or strife,
So be it; to Thy purpose built,
  Diviner uses mould my life.

Pilgrim Garments.

Ah! this life-garment with its rents and stains,
So soiled ere life's long journey we complete,
Despite our care, despite our watchful pains,
To keep it always clean and whole and sweet.

And yet I love to think that, mother-wise,
God loves the garments that are frayed and worn,
And looks with pitiful and tender eyes
Upon the robes of life we 've stained and torn.

He knows what stones and thorns beset our way.
He will not chide, when we come home at night,
But, mother-like, when babes come in from play,
Clothe His tired children then with garments white.

Heaven on Earth.

Pilgrim, passing through the world,
  Here 's a proverb you should know—
It will make your journey sweet—
  "Build your heaven as you go."

Build it now of loving deeds,
  Grateful heart and cheerful mind,
Trusting, whatsoever comes,
  Some true good therein to find.

Heaven begins by doing right,—
  Not in some dim, distant star:
Live to-day in saintly wise;
  Heaven 's about you where you are.

Here and now the light may shine
  That on angel faces falls,
And the lowest blocks be laid
  Of the alabaster walls.

"Follow Me."

Oh! tender is the breast
  That beats for you and me,
That in sweet heaven could not rest,
But braved dear love's most bitter test,
  And bled upon the tree.

And shall I fear to tread
  The path He glorified?
Nay! while the cross, though dark and dread,
Is crowned by halo of His head,
  My Lord shall be my guide!

The Heart's Proof.

Do you ask me how I prove
That our Father, God, is love?
By this world which He has made,
By the songs of grove and glade,
By the brooks that singing run,
By the shining of the sun,
By the breeze that cools my brow,
By fresh odors from the plow,
By the daisy's golden head
Shining in the fields I tread,
By the chorus of the bees
In the flowering willow-trees,
By the gentle dews and rain,
By the farmer's springing grain,
By the light of golden eves,
By the sheen of forest leaves,
By the sweets of woodland springs,
By the joy right-doing brings—
By a thousand, thousand things!

God is love, I say, until
Good in life is less than ill.
While I hear more songs than sighs,
While the stars and mornings rise,

While the wind blows fresh and sweet,
While the blossoms kiss our feet,
While men feel in good and right
Highest, purest, best delight—
Though I can not yet explain
Mysteries of sin and pain,
Yet I *know,* all doubt above,
That our Father, God, is love!

Peniel.

Unto Peniel every soul must come!
We all must wrestle till the break of day,
Sometime, with a stern angel in the way,
Whose face turns from us and whose lips are dumb.

"Thou being, strange, inscrutable, reveal
Thyself!" we cry. He answers not nor heeds,
While the night wind goes sighing in the reeds,
And the vast constellations o'er us wheel.

And then, upon a sudden, "God!" we cry,
And tremble in the arms of Him divine—
Then doubt again, if it be God or sign,
And struggle even till the morn is nigh.

In the gray dawn it comes to us—the truth:
(And we grow sudden faint, as on the thigh
The Angel touches us, for memory,
And vanishes.) The old, old sin of youth!

Peniel! We have seen Thee, God, at last,
And felt Thy withering touch upon the wrong.
So perish it! For though we wrestled long,
In loving urgence Thou didst hold us fast.

For the Master.

"This for the Master's sake I do"—
Ah, magic words to make life sweet!
Devotion, utter, single, true,
Solves all, blends all, crowns all complete.

My joy for Him more joyful is.
More bright my small successes seem,
Because I count them part of His,
And know He marks my candle-beam.

Is grief, too, for the Master's sake?
Aye! grief, blest grief, refines us well!
A heart may sweeten though it break,
And trust though nature says, "Rebel!"

The outward seeming of each day—
Defeat or triumph—matters naught.
Deep peace, sweet peace, to all who say,
"This day the Master's will I wrought."

The Final Test.

[Mr. Gladstone interpreted the spiritual meaning of the painful and incurable disease from which he suffered and died in these words: "One more lesson; one more test."]

"One more lesson; one more test."
This the Master's high behest;
This the great soul counteth best.

No repining, no despair,
In that dauntless front and air!
He who fought can also bear.

"One more lesson"—still the child,
Humble, teachable and mild,
Seeking all, by naught defiled.

"One more test"—the ripened man,
Rounding out life's utmost span,
Boweth still to flail and fan!

Grand the close of mortal day,
When its clear, unclouded ray
Lightens e'en the shadowed way!

Forbear.

FORBEAR!
Exact not all thy share.
Let somewhat of the world's sad debt
Be entered to thy credit yet.
Thou too, resourceless as thy brother,
May sometime sue before another.
How shall he meet thee, if he know
Thou didst no love, no mercy show?
Let not thy due be all thy care—
Forbear!

Forbear!
No frown of censure wear.
Curse not thy brother for his deed,
Who hast not known thy brother's need.
Condemn not, if thou canst not tell
The fiends he conquered ere he fell.
Thou, in whose path no nets were spun,
Have pity on the helpless one!
The scourge of the self-righteous spare—
Forbear!

Forbear!
Force not a soul's despair!

God over thee and over all
Doth let His dew of mercy fall;
The bruiséd reed He will not break,
The pound of flesh He will not take.
Oh, when before His throne we plead,
Let love stand proven by the deed!
All ye who heaven's crown would wear,
On earth—sad earth—forbear!
Forbear!

Forgiveness.

"Go, SIN no more." These are the Saviour's words.
The past is past. True life is here and now.
With seal of God's forgiveness on thy brow,
Greet life's new morning—happy as the birds
That lift their songs when sunrise floods the air;
For God is love, and love is everywhere!

The Eyes of the Redeemed.

I AM glad that they know, that they see us through and through,
Our dear ones, our loved ones, in life serene and new.
No withholding, yea, no hiding, from love that broodeth so.
I am glad that they know.

I am glad that they know even what was hid before.
O the yearning, O the pity, O the cleaving more and more!
O the tender, soft compassion, all-enfolding like the snow!
I am glad that they know.

I am glad that they know how their freedom makes us free,
How the bitter taste of sorrow worketh sweet in you and me.
All divine indeed the shame that doth stir and leaven so!
I am glad that they know.

Death.

STRANGE, how we think of Death,
The angel beloved of God,
With his face like an asphodel flower,
And his feet with nepenthe shod;
Strange, how we turn and flee
When he comes by the sunset way,
Out of the Valley of Rest,
Down through the purpling day!

Why should we fear him so?
What doth the white one bear?
Heartsease of Paradise,
Lilies of purer air!
Comes he so soft, so kind,
Down from the singing sky—
Soft as a mother comes,
Stirred by an infant's cry.

Why should we call him Death
(Death as we deem it), pray?
Doth he not loose the soul,
Open its womb of clay?
Which is the truer life—
Flesh, to corruption born,
Or a God-imaged soul
Launched on eternal morn?

The Desert Rose.

I BLOOM for God. In all the wild, waste moor
  There is no sign of man—nor house, nor fold,
  Nor ash of fire. So vast, so lone, so cold
The level woodland's barren, gray-mossed floor.

Vain, then, to blossom in a waste untrod,
  And sweeten desert air? Meseems not so!
  Kind skies above me bend, soft breezes blow,
The gentle night-dew falls—I bloom for God!

The Dear Togetherness.

Of all heav'n-hopes is not this hope most sweet,—
That "dear togetherness" when we shall meet?
Oh! everlasting joy of dwelling fast
With all our loved ones in one home at last!

What matters then the task we 're set to do,
How high or lowly, old as earth's, or new?
What matters whether crown or yoke we wear,
Since evermore we 'll have our dearest there?

To cry, each morn, "My own! my own!" and gaze
On unforgotten faces all the days;
To know that death no more can make love plead,
That were enough—yea, heaven were heaven indeed!

O Thou, sometime, we trust, to set all right,
O Thou, not bound fore'er by death's despite,
One thing we crave—let heaven be aught beside—
No parting more beyond that darksome tide!

The Day's Road.

"Whither hast thou made thyself a road to-day?"

Answer, soul of mine—which way
Hast thou made a road to-day?
Hast thou followed Love's sure chain
Over hill and over plain?
Whichsoever choice thou 'st made,
There another road is laid—
Not a transient, fading trail,
But a path that shall not fail.
Evermore some foot shall stray
O'er the road thou mad'st this day.

Ah, let each of us beware
How his thoughts and motives bear!
Every road that we shall choose,
Other pilgrim feet will use.
Some will follow where we lead
Long as life shapes life, indeed.
Have a brother's care, and pray
God to mark thy road each day.

Dwell Deep.

Dwell deep! This life of ours holds meanings vast;
Our years must lengthen into æons like;
Each day the shadow of itself shall cast
On days eterne, each hour for heaven strike.
Since, then, earth's issues have so grand a sweep,
Dwell deep, my soul, dwell deep!

Dwell deep! The little things that chafe and fret,
Oh, waste not golden hours to give them heed!
The slight, the thoughtless wrong, do thou forget;
Be self forgot in serving others' need.
Thou faith in God through love for man shalt keep:
Dwell deep, my soul, dwell deep!

Dwell deep! Forgo the pleasure, if it bring
Neglect of duty; consecrate each thought;
Believe thou in the good of everything,
And trust that all unto the wisest end is wrought.
Bring thou this comfort unto all who weep.
Dwell deep, my soul, dwell deep!

Dwell deep! Feign not the thing thou lackest, sure
That God knows what thou art, and that is best.
Be every purpose high, sincere and pure;
Serve with thy might, and God will do the rest.

Whoso toils truly, surely shall he reap.
Dwell deep, my soul, dwell deep!

Dwell deep! There shalt thou find the waters still
And calm, untroubled wells beneath the storm.
Above, the waves roar in the tempest chill;
Beneath, the spirit sheltered is and warm.
Let faith, deep flowing, be like infants' sleep:
Dwell deep, my soul, dwell deep!

Dwell deep! No fear shall move thee, doing right,
And trusting God, and loving all that lives.
Peace shall enfold thee like a flood of light,
And that sweet joy, which faithful service gives,
Like dew of heaven shall all thy being steep:
Dwell deep, my soul, dwell deep!

Devotion.

LARGE is the life that flows for others' sakes,
Expends its best, its noblest effort makes.
Devotion rounds the man and makes him whole;
Love is the measure of the human soul.

To lose the narrow self in God and good;
To merge the ego in the brotherhood;
To toil and suffer for our common race—
This is to fill the largest, noblest place.

The Choice.

To HIM who stands at parting ways,
Whom choice confronts of this or that—
The level path through pleasant days,
The heights the saints are toiling at—
Godspeed! and may he never rue
The road he chooses of the two.

To climb seems better, truly; for
Though hard at first, the way grows clear,
And leads by many a cheerful flower,
And daily brings that land more near
Where our departed loved ones wait
To greet us at the heavenly gate.

The broader way winds ever down,
At first through gardens fair and sweet,
And then through withering meadows brown
And slimy fens that hold the feet.
At last, with failing heart and breath,
The traveler meets the tide of death.

O youth, with spirit pledged, yet free
To make of life the truest, best,
One sure, safe path there is for thee,
The path our Saviour trod and blessed.
There walk, and thou shalt surely find
The truest good—a peaceful mind.

Completeness.

The Master takes your view of life, and mine—
Ah! blessed paradox of love divine!
He sees with eyes of all, yet eyes of each,
The near view and the wide horizon's reach.

He sees life whole, by us in part beheld;
Sees, what each misses, links that join and weld.
What is there in my world that yours debars?
Both do but dot God's milky way of stars.

Abide.

Abide!
Let naught thy faith, thy purpose, turn aside.
Say unto grief and pain and seeming ill,
"All ways are God's, and I but follow still
His leading in the darkness deep and wide."

Abide,
Albeit thou art vexed with doubt and tried
By every test the steadfast soul may know.
Still say, "I trust," and with calm spirit go
The way God wills, for God is at thy side.

Abide
In that sure love that never yet denied.
He who hath promised thee, is He not true?
Nor surer winter's snow nor summer's dew
Than God's rewarding. Heaven will provide!

Abide,
Nor let the paths of life and hope divide.
Hold fast thy faith, whate'er the trial be.
Yea, hold it fast as God holds fast to thee,
And soon, ah! soon, thou shalt be satisfied.

Beyond To-day.

Beyond to-day—ah! that should most concern us;
Not pain or pleasure now, what irks, what suits.
How are we living for the long to-morrows?
What are we sowing of eternal fruits?
O, idler, trifler, pleasure-seeker, stay!
What of that endless life, beyond to-day?

What of the work begun for heaven's concluding,
The pattern we shall finish over there?
What of the loves and friendships, hopes and longings,
That earth bequeaths to heaven's diviner air?
The potter's hand may crumble with his clay;
What he designed survives, beyond to-day.

All life's best music swells the angel chorus;
We bear our songs to heaven, like the lark.
No living fire is quenched that burns within us;
Some flame eternal kindles from its spark.
Earth's noblest, sweetest, will not pass away;
It shall be ours once more, beyond to-day!

Each hour a sentence, and each year a chapter—
Such is the book of life, in sequence clear.
Earth fills a volume, heaven—ah! how many!
But all one story, written there or here.
Strive then, O friend, the best in thee to say,
For that divine review, beyond to-day!

Afterwards.

God laid a burden on me when I came
To man's estate. At first I took it sore,
And grieved because my freedom was no more,
And wrought unwillingly. Ah, me! the shame,
The blindness of it! Afterwards I saw
The blessedness, the crown, of duty's law.

Then disappointment came, and I rebelled,
And thought it God's unkindness. Day by day
I wept, because my will was not God's way,
And childish, bitter thoughts within me welled.
But afterwards, O Father! when I had
Life's b[illegible] through that refusal, I was glad.

And last, and bitterest of all, came grief.
Then was I sure that God had struck in wrath.
How deep the night that closed about my path—
No gleam of hope, no comfort, no relief!
But light was in the gloom, though I was blind;
I see it now—all life transformed, refined.

So I have learned to bide God's purpose. Sure
Am I He doeth naught for us amiss.
Pain is His shadow when He stoops to kiss,
And sorrow is His fire to make us pure.
O Father! by Thy very fatherhood,
We do believe Thou sendest naught but good!

The Beggar by the Way.

WOUND not the woeful beggar's heart, I say,
Though he beseech thee loudly by the way,
And cause thy selfish, hurrying feet to stay.

Is he impostor? Pitiful, indeed,
If such remorse be added to his need!
Be sure his lot is hard, if he so plead.

Suppose thyself thus stript of all resource,
Soliciting in vain till thou art hoarse—
Thrice miserable for lies that make it worse!

Would'st thou not very pitible seem?
And would'st thou not a stony Christian deem
Him who pushed by with eyes as in a dream?

Have mercy on the beggar! If he be
Sinful withal, does judgment rest with thee?
Art thou in God's eyes whiter, then, than he?

Give, if thou wilt—but if thou must deny,
Do as Christ would, if He were passing by:
Bestow the gentle alms of voice and eye.

Along the Way.

THERE are so many helpful things to do
Along life's way
(Helps to the helper, if we but knew),
From day to day!
So many troubled hearts to soothe,
So many pathways rough to smooth,
So many comforting words to say
To hearts that falter along the way.

Here is a lamp of hope gone out
Along the way.
Some one stumbled and fell, no doubt—
But, brother, stay!
Out of thy store of oil refill;
Kindle the courage that smoulders still:
Think what Jesus would do, to-day,
For one who had fallen beside the way.

How many lifted hands still plead,
Along life's way!
The old, sad story of human need
Reads on for aye.
But let us follow the Saviour's plan—
Love unstinted to every man!
Content if, at most, the world should say:
"He helped his brother along the way."

The Broken Fold.

Dear my friend, grieve not o'ermuch
For the vanished voice and touch;
Sit not gazing, white and cold,
At the broken curtain-fold.

Thou this little chamber hast,
But the house is high and vast.
He hath freedom now to go
In and out and to and fro.

O the crystal-fountained halls!
O the rosy-windowed walls!
O the music and the bloom,
As he treads from room to room!

Backward shall the curtain flow
In the little chamber low?
Shall he here return and dwell,
Bearing sprays of asphodel?

Nay, ah nay! Bide thou a while
In thy place, nor weep, but smile.
Some day—sweet day!—thou shalt rise,
Pass the curtain, meet his eyes!

Apart with God.

APART with God—how beautiful the thought!
From cares of earth to win such sweet release;
To lay aside the vexing task, half-wrought,
And by the green, o'ershadowed path of peace
Seek the white altar that the saints have sought!

Oh! precious is the quiet place of prayer,
Where heaven and earth, where God and mortal meet.
To that dear spot come neither pain nor care,
And all about is like a garden sweet,
The flowers whereof shed healing on the air.

There, brother, bring thy trial's vexing thorn,
And God shall pluck it out and give thee rest.
There bring thy sin, and He whose side was torn
Shall cleanse thy soul to be His palimpsest,
New-written as thy spirit is new-born.

None is forbid that blest communion—none.
The hands that spanned the cruel cross so wide,
Thus would they clasp the troubled race, as one
Lost brother, by love's anguish justified.
Come, whosoe'er! Behold, thou art God's son!

The Abiding Image.

"A HUMAN wreck,"—so called they him; and so,
Indeed, with his poor vacant face and eye,
His broken speech and trembling hands, he seemed.
But like a flash, as some one dropt a word,
Familiar once, in his dull ear, a gleam
Shot o'er the face of that long-darkened soul,
And all the native godhood of the man
Leapt with a grand assertion to its throne.
Not lost, not lost, this sure divinity,
So gloomed, obscured, and darkened down with sin!
Not lost, thank God! but, like a noble slave
With patience waiting freedom's promised dawn,
It suffers on in hope, it bears its chains,
Content to bear them, so they crush it not,
Till God strikes off these gyves and weights of clay,
And frees his prisoned image and his child.

Henceforth, no heir of God will I despise,
Though level with the dust from which he sprang;
For still that Breath which once informed the dust
Pervades it, and that image, all divine,
Lurks underneath its garmenture of clay.
My brother, oh! have courage for thyself!
Though faint and crushed, lie not with forehead prone,
But prostrate still, if must be, turn thy face,
And let God's love shine sweetly on thy brow!

Brotherhood.

MARK well this fact—not often urged, indeed—
That one's own business, if he mind it best,
Concerns the common welfare, takes due heed
How self, the unit, stands toward all the rest.

A lean and narrow virtue must it be,
Content with "meddle not!"—to go one's way,
A skulker, hemmed with selfish privacy,
Who lets one's brother suffer as he may.

To mind one's business, rather, as God minds—
That 's the true way, the Christian way. God's son
Full room within the common pathway finds
To walk his way, and yet walk not alone.

Equal Builders.

So I BUT hold to the appointed thing
For me, my part in God's great plan, the bit
He leaves for my most patient fashioning
Of life's work, incomplete for lack of it:—
So I am wise, where needs the humble wit
To 'broider well an altar-covering,
Or to its place one stone more truly fit,
With joy, not shame, my service I will bring.

For lo! the Temple in its beauty stands,
And we are equal builders, thou, and I,
And all. God's helpers, whether great or small,
In the result are neither low nor high;
For each hath used his gift of brain or hands,
And God, the Master Builder, wrought through all.

Measurement.

"WHAT hast thou wrought?" is the world's demand,
"Where is thy product, of brain or hand?"
That presented, the wise world says,
"Take *this* place!" And the man obeys.

Somewhat otherwise measures God—
Searches the soul with love's testing-rod;
Gets its innermost depth and plan;
Ignores the product, exalts the man.

The Miner's Star.

Uplooking from the sunless depths of mines
To where the shaft frames in the mid-day sky,
One sees, sometimes, a star serene and high,
That only for the toiling miner shines.

They who walk cheerful in the upper air
Can only see the sweeping vault of blue.
Their wealth of sunshine hides the deeper view,
And they forget the star-worlds burning there.

So, it may be, our Father doth reveal
Clear-shining hopes to each bereavèd one.
Such souls dwell deep; they lack our breadth of sun,
But in their patch of sky the planets wheel!

Nature's Way.

WHY Nature is so sweet,
Sufficient and complete,
Grows plainer day by day
To him who learns her way.

And Nature's way is this:
In naught to be remiss;
To build a tree, a weed,
As if with God agreed;

To be as frank and true
As the clear bead of dew;
In faith and not in doubt
To live one's essence out.

Ah! happy is the man
Who follows Nature's plan,—
Pretends not; is too great
To seem or imitate;

Is utterly sincere,
Though all the world appear;
Serves how and where God meant,
And therewith is content.

Opportunity.

Oh, the rare, sweet sense of living, when one's heart
leaps to his labor,
And the very joy of doing is life's richest, noblest
dower!
Let the soul that loves repining crave the purple of
its neighbor—
Give me just the strength for serving and the
potent present hour.

An Old Denarius.

Here is an old denarius from Rome—
Some Cæsar's head half buried in green rust—
That in this polished case hath found a home,
Secure from any tarnish more or dust.

I call it "rust," this green and purple stain
Upon the ancient silver coin,—but, nay!
'T is but the copper driven out, as pain
And sorrow purge from us the dross away.

Pure, ah! how pure this precious disk, refined
By ages' testing!—purer than the hour
When first in the great emperor's mint it shined,
The glistening type of all his pomp and power.

So we, all scarred and stained by life's long test,
Are we not purer than the soul untried,
Whose coarse alloy doth still abuse its best,—
A coin that shines, but is unpurified?

One Day at a Time.

We carry too often the burden that ne'er
Was meant for this day, nor the next day, to bear.
How often we borrow the ills we deplore,
And shrink from the woes that ne'er darken our door!
Such worry 's a sin; let 's be quit of the crime,
By living one day, just one day, at a time.

A day at a time—that 's enough, if we knew,
To spend all our strength on, and anxious thought too.
Its tasks and its trials, its varied demands,
Are all we can handle with one pair of hands.
Each day fitly lived makes the record sublime;
God perfects us slowly—one day at a time.

Then let the to-morrows stand waiting, I say,
And deal with each one when its name is To-day.
The best preparation the future can ask
Is doing one's best with to-day and its task.
Life's highest and best, that 's the peak we must climb
By faithfulest footsteps—one day at a time.

Only a Step.

Only a step between life and death—
Length of a heartbeat, span of a breath!
Think of it, soul—but an instant's flight
From here and now to the judgment light!

Only a step—yet it means the span
Of fate's vast arc to the soul of man.
The parting paths and the choice, to-day—
To-morrow, the infinite, changeless way!

Now.

As I PURSUE my pilgrim way,
One thought abideth, day by day,
As 't were some winning song's refrain—
"I shall not pass this way again."

It bids me be as one whose trust
Discerns the pearl amid the dust,
For hidden good so watchful, fain—
"I shall not pass this way again."

While thus reminded, I divine
My brother's need and make it mine.
Blest be the chance to soothe his pain!—
"I shall not pass this way again."

To do what gracious thing I may
Belongeth only to this day.
Here at my feet it once hath lain—
"I shall not pass this way again."

A Parallel.

PERCHANCE some self-wrought, needless harm
Befalls a lately-punished child,
Ere scarce is stilled the earlier storm
Of troubled tears and sobbings wild.

Straightway the little sufferer flies
To that dear bosom it has fled;
The later trouble floods its eyes,—
Estrangement's bitterness is dead.

It pleads its broken sorrow, fain,
It knows not why, to be caressed.
O heart! 't was not the trivial pain,
'T was separation that distressed!

So we, whom sin so oft removes
From that great, loving heart of God,
When some unseen disaster proves
The wisdom of the chastening rod,

Fly to His bosom with our care,
Rejoiced to be so reconciled;
While He, who loves us here or there,
Folds in His arms His erring child.

The Two Angels.

[From Krummacher's "Parabeln."]

Evening had come upon the heavenly plain,
Bringing her myriad stars; and gentle Night,
Walking with statelier pace not far behind,
Looked down and smiled upon the weary world.
Bathed were the meadows in a drowsy mist;
The woods and hills were purpling with the sky;
From every cot the curling smoke arose,
And mounted heavenward like a vesper prayer.

Wand'ring together through the dewy fields,
Death and his gracious brother, Sleep, drew nigh
A soft green hillside carpeted with moss,
And there with one accord they laid them down.
Awhile they watched the slow descent of night,
The fading of the scene, the thick'ning stars;
Then Sleep arose and from his right hand strewed
The seeds of slumber o'er the waiting world,
While Death, half-raised, looked up with wistful face.
When Sleep had done he laid him down again
And, with his arm about the neck of Death,
Said, "Brother, what a blessed task is ours;
How beautiful and holy are our ways!"
But Death replied, with tears in his dark eyes,

"Alas! my brother, I am not beloved
Of men; they tremble when my steps draw near.
Alone, of all the angels, I am feared.
Am I so terrible, so fierce and strange?"

Then Slumber made reply, with pitying tear:
"Sweet brother, be not grieved; God knoweth best,
Though strange to us His loving counsels seem.
Oh, would men saw thee, as I see thee now,
Benignant, gentle, lovely as thou art!
But when the resurrection morn shall come,
Then shall they know thee, and with rapturous joy
Hail thee their benefactor and their friend.
Me, in their present blindness, they love most;
Thee shall they love through all eternity."

Then the two brothers tenderly embraced,
And hand in hand went joyful on their way.

Providence.

How OFT, O God, when we have wept in vain
  O'er Thy decrees, and blurred with fretful tears
  The heavenward window of the soul, appears
  Thy purpose sweet and wise, in after years,
Like sunshine streaming through the veils of rain!

If we had had our way—if Thou had'st given
  The lesser good into our pleading hands,
  Withholding larger; if the small demands
  Of human choice, that sees nor understands
Life's broader issues, had prevailed with heaven;

If we had never wept, nor known the keen,
  Pure, cleansing pain of sorrow's sacred fire—
  The broken tie, the unfulfilled desire—
  Our sluggish lives had never risen higher,
But, fixed in self, had ever selfish been.

But Thou hast led us out of self, hast shown
  How love's great circle rounds from soul to soul,
  How sorrow makes us quick to others' dole
  And binds each unit in the larger whole
Of life and love, complete in Thee alone.

O God, Thy thought enfolds us all! The days
Ev'n of this brief, imperfect life attest,
Ere they are spent, Thy will is ever best.
Oh, may we in Thy love and wisdom rest,
For Thou dost know the end of all our ways!

A Prayer.

Though I should wear the bitter thorns
Of undeservèd hates and scorns;
Though bleeding heart of mine should hide
Some lifelong wound of love denied;

Though pain should follow, like a shade,
Where'er my foot for comfort strayed,
And all the blessings that I sought
Were into failure's crosses wrought;

If God so willed it, I would bear
My burden bravely, all my prayer
That, howsoever hard the road,
My strength might equal still my load.

The Promise of Peace.

At dawn, as I lay half-waking and longing to sleep
again,
Because, as my eyelids lifted, there in the dusk sat
Pain,
There came from the orchard floating the first flute-
tone of the spring—
The robin's song
I had missed so long,
The song with the cheery ring!

I started, and Sorrow started, and we looked in each
other's eye,
While robin sang like a seraph, throat up, to the dim,
gray sky.
I thought, for a blissful moment, that trouble had
never been,
And Sorrow's face
Wore an angel's grace,
And lo! I had peace within!

A moment? Well, if a moment, an age in its
potency!
Something in robin's singing brought promise of
peace to me.

Utterly was I lightened, one instant, of all my pain,
When robin sang,
When the silence rang,
When the spring came back again.

I think it was Heaven's answer to agonized, pleading prayer—
A hint of the perfect healing that waits us, sometime, somewhere.
O God! I will trust that surely, as there in the springtide dawn,
Some heavenly day,
For ever and aye,
The sense of our griefs will be gone!

Renewal.

Earth-smell from plow and from harrow,
The love-cadenced song of the sparrow,
Life sunned to the core and the marrow—
  Ah! infinite sweetness of spring!
What means it, this joy beyond saying,
This praising transmuted to praying,
This holy delight in obeying,
  This rapture of everything?

It means that prophetic foreseeing,
That hope at the heart of all being,
That trustful and joyful agreeing,
  That life is renewed evermore;
The bird-songs forever returning,
The blush of the twigs ever burning,
Faith's cup brimming o'er for our yearning—
  God's love warming life to the core.

O birds, with your little throats swelling!
O buds, of June blossoms foretelling!
O world-hope forever indwelling,
  Ye can not proclaim it in vain!
Yea, sure as the springtime 's awaking,
All creatures their prison bars breaking,
So sure is my faith, in its taking
  Firm hold of God's promise again!

Revealments.

Not in whirlwind, nor in torrent,
  Speaks God's voice with surest power,
But in silent, sweet unfoldings,
  Like the beauty of a flower.

In the golden depths of sunset,
  In the green and dewy sod,
In the brook that babbles seaward,
  We behold the thoughts of God.

Not by power's display He wins us,
  Riven cloud and thunder-peal,
But He draws us by His goodness,
  As the magnet draws the steel.

Who can measure His compassion?
  It is like yon blue above,
Bending o'er us, sinful, sinning,
  Its unpillared arch of love.

It is like fond Nature's pity
  For the feeblest, frailest things.
How with thorns she guards the roses!
  How she shields the insect's wings!

Helpless we as bowing rushes
In the fierce December blast;
But the arm that girds creation
Is the arm that holds us fast.

Oh, to read that wondrous lesson,
Writ in every flower and star:
There 's an Unseen Power that loves us,
Weak and wandering though we are!

Remembering the Dead.

On the other side of the stream
That steals by this earthly shore,
I know that our loved ones love us still,
Just as they loved of yore.

They carry us in their thoughts;
They speak of us when they meet,
And ever and ever the troth of old
Bides with them, warm and sweet.

O patient and constant dead,
Whom so easily we put by,
Who fade away from our inmost thoughts
As the stars fade out of the sky!

We put them so far away,
We hide them so deep with God;
We think of them snatched to the farthest star
As soon as they 're under the sod.

Ah me! it is pitiful so,
Dear lovers, so leal and near,
Aye pressing your faces against the gates
Of our hearts, and we will not hear!

O friends, when our sainted dead
  Pass over that unseen line,
They fly not far, to a foreign land,
  They dwell in your land and mine;

A land that no fire can burn,
  No element sweep away,
The dear, long home of immortal love,
  God's country and ours for aye!

So draw to them closer there,
  As of old time, hand in hand.
God meant we should walk, through life and
    death,
  In Love's immortal land.

"Rock of Ages."

SHE is one to sorrow born,
  But her faith knows not defeat;
In the desert of her griefs
  She has found a refuge sweet.
Day by day, from task to task,
  Prayerful as on bended knee,
Still she hymns that dear refrain:
  "Rock of Ages, cleft for me!"

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me"—
  For my sorrow, for my pain,
For the anguish old as life,
  And yet new each morn again;
For the burden, for the cross,
  For my daily Calvary,
For the friends who turn aside—
  "Rock of Ages, cleft for me!"

Humble, faithful, toiling one,
  Bless thee for that song of thine,
For the courage that it lends,
  For the peace and trust divine!
Bless thee for thy daily faith,
  For the knowledge that makes free,
For the heart's triumphant psalm,
  "Rock of Ages, cleft for me!"

If thy sorrow-stricken soul,
  If thy labor-burdened days,
If thy loneliness, thine ills,
  Wake such strains of trust and praise,
Surely, refuge in God's love
  For the whole sad world must be,
And we all with joy should sing,
  "Rock of Ages, cleft for me!"

Revelation.

CLOUDLET, sailing o'er the sky,
Thou art nearer God than I;
Tell me, canst thou feel Him nigh?

Mountain, with thy forehead white
Ever lifted, day and night,
Speak! What voices fill the height?

Star, O star, with holy face,
Shining in the highest place,
Canst not thou God's presence trace?

Star and cloud and mountain dumb—
Is not God revealed to some?
Yea, whene'er the heart says "Come!"

The Song by the Way.

Some songs are for honor and praise and display,
And some are for comfort and help by the way.
Give unto the artist the wreath and the rose,
But unto the other—ah, heart only knows!

O dear, humble singer, whose mission divine
Is cheer—just God's cheer—to all brothers of thine,
Not yet, it may be, is thine honor complete,
But when God confers it the praise shall be sweet!

The Sentence on the Wall.

A LATIN sentence on a chapel wall
One wrought to whom the words were mystical.
He copied letters only—but so well
A new light on the poet's meaning fell.

So we work out God's purpose, not foreknown,
Not understood, but held through faith alone.
Letter by letter trustfully we trace.
God knoweth—we the bidden symbols place.

Our duty, then? interpretation? No,—
Love's faithful touch that makes the symbol glow;
To do as bid, to write our sentence clear,
That 's all; God's meaning duly shall appear.

Self-Knowing.

If I but knew
My own self rightly, through and through,
What larger outlooks I might find
To which my spirit now is blind!
Whoe'er would map the broader land
Must first his view-point understand,
Find self, know self, and not till then
Assume to judge his fellow-men.

Unless I see
The weaknesses and faults in me,
Those very things that warp my soul
Make life seem crooked in the whole.
Uncharity at home begins,
And all the world wears each man's sins.
Ah, 't is a sweeter spirit, friend,
Our virtues, not our faults, to lend!

Lord, help me so
To know myself as thou dost know!
Yea, not on all humanity
I 'd have my sins' dark shadows lie;
But I would hold in clearest view,
First, all my failings; then, if true
One virtue 's mine, show that, O God!
That I may shed its grace abroad.

A Song of Loving.

This, I think, is heaven-wise—
Loving all that 'round us lies,
Every beast that runs or flies,
Every creature, kin or no,
Every being, high or low;—
Loving every day divine,
Whether it be rain or shine,
Loving every breath we draw—
Loving death, which is God's law.

Just to love whatever comes,—
All philosophy it sums!
For, if God does only best
(So we have our faith professed),
Let us in assurance rest.
Though sometimes the way seems dim,
Leave it, troubled heart, to Him!
Though the song may sometimes faint,
Sing it bravely still, O saint!
While the bird's flute heeds not rain,
Let no son of God complain.
Love the storm, and love the sun,
For in truth they are but one.
Back of cloud and storm and night
Lie eternal Love and Light!

Simply Used.

Men usefulest in the world are simply used.
—Mrs. Browning.

I would be simply used,
Spending myself in humble task or great,
Priest at the altar, keeper of the gate,
So be my Lord requireth just that thing
Which at the needful moment I may bring.

Oh, joy of serviceableness divine!
Of merging will and work, dear Lord, in thine,
Of knowing that results, however small,
Fitly into thy stream of purpose fall.
I would be simply used!

The Shepherd's Way.

By many a way the sheep are led,
Through valleys green, o'er mountains dread;
But by whatever path they fare,
The shepherd goes before them there.

Poor, troubled flock, forget your fear,
Who have the Shepherd ever near!
Can ye not trust the way he goes,
Through velvet grass or bitter snows?

Think, as ye follow, how alone
His feet have bled on ice and stone;
How up against the toilsome steep
He bears the lamb for which ye weep.

O shame, if any shall refuse
To tread the path which he doth choose!
Dear flock, in sweet assurance dwell;
The Shepherd's way is well—is well.

Simeon.

He lived in hope of One who was to come.
His daily walk was humble and devout,
And yet there shined a glory him about,
And thoughts too great for utterance kept him dumb—
Not alway; for his soul shot fire, when some
Flung at the prophecies their sneer of doubt;
Whom with the flame of faith he put to rout!
He helped the poor, with loaf and not with crumb.
Most just he was, yet full of tenderness,
And others' woes he wept as though his own;
For ever in his soul a vision shone,
Gentler and lovelier than the world had known.
He lived the holy Babe of heaven to bless;—
His fragrant faith through all the earth is blown!

Sons of God.

[1 John iii, 2.]

God's sons, my brother, you and I—
His sons, howe'er His love we try;
Dear sons, to whom His heart is nigh.

Ah! if we thus God's image bear,
And His immortal glory share,
How pure our lives should be and fair!

How nobly should we live and move,
Intent, each day and hour, to prove
Our title to that royal love!

The Secret.

Men wondered why, in August heat,
The little brook with music sweet
Could glide along the dusty way,
When all else parched and silent lay.

Few stopped to think how, every morn,
The sparkling stream anew was born
In some moss-circled mountain pool,
Forever sweet and clear and cool.

A life that, ever calm and glad,
One melody and message had—
"How keeps it so," men asked, "when I
Must change with every changing sky?"

Ah! if men knew the secret power
That gladdens every day and hour,
Would they not change to song life's care,
By drinking at the fount of prayer?

Sunday Morning Bells.

STILL are the streets, for the roar of trade
  Hushes to-day. In park and in square,
Thanking God for the morn He has made,
  The people taste the sun and the air.
And the bells seem to say:
"O beautiful day!
O day of rest,
God's last and God's best,
  Free from life's burden of toil and of care!"

Over the city,
Like the palm of God's pity,
  Arches the sky;
And the bells in the steeple
Ring peace to the people—
  "God loves you!" they cry.
Ah, but the woe that lurks deep in the town—
  (Ring, bells, ring!)
Such a sea of sin and trouble to drown!
  (Ring, bells, ring!)
Beggars' hands that are blue and old,
Children pinched with hunger and cold,
Misers slaving for gold, more gold,
Souls like merchandise bought and sold.

Room for God's pity
Here in the city—
Angels' tears, if the truth were told!

"Be brave! be hopeful!" the bells reply.
"Here in the town
There 's the up and the down.
Life's sun may shine, or life's sky may frown,
We must do what we can to make man love man—
That is the way God's kingdom began!"

Ring hope, ring cheer,
Ye silver bells!
Ring God's great love
With all your swells!
For life is sweet in spite of its sorrow—
Good to-day, and better to-morrow.
Pain is good, if we pain obey;
Sin has use in its own dark way—
Use as the night has unto the day.
God is our Father,
All will come right.
He to great love is
What sun is to light—
Source of its being,
Might of its might!

A Song of Trust.

WHAT says the grass when shouts the wind
  And all the bending spears lie low?
It says, "The Lord of life is kind!
  Tread me, O Wind! but I shall grow."

What says the brook when fretting stones
  Its currents cleave and turn aside?
It says, in cheery, silver tones,
  "Stones make the music of my tide!"

And I, if grass and water find
  God's way and theirs in sweet accord—
Shall I not tune my heart and mind
  To the wise purpose of my Lord?

Temptation.

Temptation knocking at the door!
A stranger passing by—no more.
Heed not, and for his wile and shame
You are, in truth, no whit to blame.

But listen, peer, and then unbar
To parley—first at fault you are.
The rogue displays your very sin—
And, two to one, you 'll ask him in!

That ends it; soon he has you fast,
And owns you and your house, at last.
Ah! heed the warning while you may—
Let evil knock and go away.

True Riches.

From this fair world I 'll take away
No thing I 've wrought in gold or clay.
Though it were prize of highest worth,
It can not pass the door of earth.

But whatsoever I have wrought
In character, of deed or thought,
That is the wealth death can not snatch
When after me earth's door shall latch.

To the Fore.

Move to the fore,
Men whom God hath made fit for the fray.
Not yours to shrink, as the feeble ones may;
Not yours to parley and quibble and shirk:
Ill for the world, if ye do not God's work.
Move to the fore!

Move to the fore.
Say not another is fitter than thou—
Shame to the manhood that sits on thy brow!
Own thyself equal to all that man may.
Cease thine evading; God needs thee to-day.
Move to the fore!

Move to the fore.
God Himself waits, and must wait, till thou come.
Men are God's prophets, though ages lie dumb.
Halts the Christ-kingdom, with conquest so near?
Thou art the cause, then, thou man at the rear.
Move to the fore!

The Transferred Sheaves.

A CHRISTMAS POEM.

Two neighbors, blessed with a sufficient store
For winter's pressing need, and somewhat more,
Determined (each suspecting not his brother)
They 'd make a gift of sheaves unto each other.

The first one said: "My neighbor John is poor—
No prattling children play about his door;
I 'll take, then, these twelve sheaves for Christmas cheer,
And add them to his harvest of the year."

The second likewise said: "There 's my poor neighbor,
With ten small mouths dependent on his labor.
I 'll take these twelve full bundles, sheaf by sheaf,
And hide them with his own, on Christmas Eve."

And so, when o'er the earth with radiance mild
The stars that shone upon the Saviour child
Shone once again, while angels sang above,
Each neighbor paid his debt of Christmas love.

The morning broke; and each, as oft before,
Went forth for that day's portion of his store.
When lo! each saw the sheaves which he had given
Unto his brother full restored by heaven!

Tears.

Most kindly purges of the human soul,
Solvents of selfish hardness, when we grow
Careless of others' ailments, being whole!
Melt me to tears at some poor brother's woe,
And all my best is roused. I hate my sin,
I hate my selfish self, I hate my pride;
And down I kneel at that dear sufferer's side,
And with love's arms could take the whole race in.
O blessed tears, and happy power to weep!
God help us that we grow not so controlled,
In these most artificial days, that soon,
Whatever storm of sorrow round us sweep,
Like blocks of Parian marble deftly hewn,
We move nor lid nor lip when all is told.

The Tuning.

O FATHER! make me patient
To bear life's stress and strain,
This gradual ascension
Of character through pain.

I would not flinch the process,
Though it were anguish fine.
Tune Thou my soul, O Master,
Unto Thy song divine!

Prayer and Service.

He truest prays who least his love professes,
But girds his loins and serves and guides and blesses.
God never frowns, be sure, at shortened prayer,
Transmuted to true service, anywhere.
The loving toil of hand or tongue or pen
Is better than the long-intoned Amen.
Yea, when man's heart to service true is sworn,
All life 's a prayer, to highest heaven borne.

The Love of God.

I SOUGHT a symbol for the love of God—
The gentle mothering of the April sod;
The wide and deep and all-enfolding sky
That bends above the world; the great rock nigh
The little shadow-loving violet;
Soft-brooding Night that bids the soul forget;
The rain, the soft and tender summer rain
Upon the thirsty grass. But all in vain
Sought I the like of Love Divine! All space,
All worlds, all creatures, borrow of its grace.
The earth is fruitful because God 's above;
The sky 's a cup o'erbrimming with His love;
The rock that shades the trustful violet
In the dry sand by God's own hand was set;
Sleep's balm is but a drop of Heaven's compassion,
Distilled to soothe us after nature's fashion;
And not a heat-parched blade would cease from pain,
Were not God's love more tender than the rain.

Building.

We are building, every day,
In a good or evil way,
And the structure, as it grows,
Must our inmost self disclose,
Till in every arch and line
All our hidden faults outshine.

Do you ask what building this
That can show both pain and bliss,
That can be both dark and fair?
Lo! its name is Character.
Build it well, whate'er you do!
Build it straight and strong and true,
Build it clean and high and broad,
Build it for the eye of God.

L. of C.

True Charity.

Oh, what a multitude of needy ones—
God's heirs, too, in this wide and fruitful earth—
Go beggared, spite our sterile charities!
More love, more love!—would God we had more
love!
O Father, help us so to hear man's cry
That heart to heart shall answer—not alone
Hand answer hand. God help us so to give
That in the giving soul and gift may glow
With that most wondrous, that unuttered joy
Of heart to heart with the indwelling Christ!

Valuation.

What is life worth? how measure it? I say,
Life is what life can compass,—not mere length
Of days, but what is packed into each day,
Best use and largest increment of time and strength.

This is God's just appraisement,—how we make,
Or fail to make, life equal to its chance
Of good; what heaven's heritage we take,
What perfectness achieve, in view of circumstance.

To make life all it has in it to be,—
Just that, its measure, rounded full and fair,—
Reveals the statue hid in you and me,
And satisfies the Master's heart who placed it there.

The Unknown City.

THERE is a city, somewhere out of ken,
Where dwell our loved ones. Silently they fare
Over the river to the fields of air,
And we may never speak them here again.
But, oh! how dear they make that other-where,
That Unknown City, to the hearts of men!

Until the Day Break.

O HEART! though night be long and dreary,
Of patient faith be thou not weary!
The earth upon its axle turns;
The brave, bright sun forever burns;
Aye, day shall break for him who yearns,
And so be cheery!

For all of us some shadows gather,
Some nights shut down with starless weather.
But who, to mortal trouble born,
E'er knew a night without a morn?
Let 's take fresh courage, heart forlorn,
And hope together!

Until the day break, cease repining,
And watch the stars, if stars be shining.
But if no stars gleam overhead,
Faith's clear and holy lamp instead
May touch the shadows that we dread
With silver lining.

The day shall break! No dark forever
Blots out man's blessing or endeavor.
A time to feel how weak is dust—
A night of waiting, when we must—
But never endless dark, we trust,
Night regnant—never!

Who Is My Brother?

We are quick to see the ill—we are slow to share the blame;
We can blush for others' shame—but how cold our deed and will!
We can lash with logic's thong, we can sing a pleading song,
But we dare not clasp the hands that are lifted to us still.

Is it right, O thou, and thou, jugglers with the art of speech?
Shall we only rhyme and teach, with a calm judicial brow?
Nay! the sacrifice for all, platted thorns and cup of gall,
Till injustice yields to love, and we all as brothers bow!

Soldiers.

The brave defenders of our land
For God and home and freedom fought.
They saved their country, sword in hand,
Their victories with blood were bought.

We aid no less the nation's weal,
Nor in the Master's service lag,
Though blade of kindness be our steel
And palm of peace our battle-flag.

Appropriation.

I WOULD make use of life,
Full use, best use! Let come what will,
'T is life, and life my cup shall fill.
Or sweet or bitter be the draught,
Boots not, but how the cup is quaffed.
What out of aloes or sweet wine
Doth enter in, becometh mine?
From this my God-appointed fate
What good shall I appropriate?
Be such my spirit's inquiry:
God fixed my lot—but left me free!

Out of all stress and strife,
Out of all disappointments, pain,
What deathless profit shall I gain?
If sorrow cometh, shall it slay,
Or shall I bear a song away?
When wave and tide against me lift,
Shall I still cleave my course, or drift?
Soul, nerve thyself to such as these
Deep problems, sacred destinies!
It matters not what fate may give;
The best is thine—to nobly live!

Eternal Progress.

To HIM who lives aright the flight of time
  Conveys no sad regret. He sees and feels
That life but mellows with its autumn rime,
  And each new day some richer promise seals.

Why should the future change this gathering good?
  He trusts that evermore from sky to sky
His days shall climb, till life's fair plenitude
  Spreads like a golden noontide broad and high.

Falsehood.

He who by conscious choice has lied,
Has universal law defied,
Struck straight across the high stars' courses,
And dared all planetary forces.

Environment.

I WILL not blame environment
  For lack in me of larger good.
Time, place, are just the soil God gives
  For habitation and for food.

What we become, ourselves decide.
  'T is in us, like the germs of seeds,
And blossoms out, in spite of place,
  As corn grows side by side with weeds.

The Enfolding Hand.

My little one with flushed and troubled face
Sat by my study table, toiling late
O'er strange white creatures scrawled upon her slate;
And oft did she erase,
With sighs, the nameless figures that she drew,
And on the clouded slate began anew.
The damp curls tumbling down
Vexed her hot face, but still she wrought,
Her velvet forehead rumpled in a frown,
Nor aid of me besought.

My writing done,
I sat and watched her with a hidden smile,
Marking each line the while
With wistful thought to help the little one.
But what she sought to draw
I never under heaven saw!

At length she raised her little grieved, hot face
And tear-dimmed eyes,
Nor spoke, but brought the slate and climbed my knee
So trustful-wise,
And gave the blunted pencil unto me,
And nestled down in her accustomed place.

Then did I understand,
And in the wee soiled hand
Replaced the pencil, while my own
Clasped the tired fingers. And I drew
The finest horse I knew—
Such as my babe had sought to draw alone.
So was she happily content,
And smiling to her mother went.

Not otherwise, I love to think,
When we have planned and wrought and wept in vain,
Does the God-Father take our childish hands in His,
And help us to attain
The best that in us is.
When from the hopeless task forespent we shrink.
Defeated, weary and undone,
Then doth that loving One
Bend pitying o'er us and with heavenly pow'rs
Enforce these human purposes of ours.
O child of His! believe
He yearneth o'er us, e'en as you and I
Over our children when they grieve
Because their small ideals prove too high.
Ah! fain is He, did we but understand,
To fold in His the faltering human hand!

Exalted.

So HIS noble soul at last
To its larger work has passed!
Say not that his course is run.
Heaven is older than the sun,
Heaven saw his task begun.

One more hampered hero freed
From the toils of mortal need!
One more captain on God's field,
Armed with mightier sword and shield
Than of yore his arms could wield!

Hassam's Proverb.

King Hassam, well beloved, was wont to say,
When aught went wrong, or any labor failed:
"To-morrow, friends, will be another day!"
And in that faith he slept, and so prevailed.

Long live this proverb! While the world shall roll,
To-morrow fresh shall rise from out the night
And new baptize the indomitable soul
With courage for its never-ending fight.

No one, I say, is conquered till he yields;
And yield he need not while, like mist from glass,
God wipes the stain of life's old battlefields
From every morning that He brings to pass.

New day, new hope, new courage! Let this be,
O soul, thy cheerful creed. What 's yesterday,
With all its shards and wrack and grief, to thee!
Forget it, then—here lies the victor's way!

Growth by Conquest.

God sends us only what He sees
Is fittest to our destinies,—
Best stuff for every workman's gain,
Most suited to his adze and plane.
Some quarrel with it on the spot;
Some plane it out, through warp and knot.
To love the best, but not to hate
The hardest, bitterest mortal fate—
To hate it not, but use it so
We, if not it, may better grow—
That is the charmed philosophy
We ought to study, you and I!

The Hidden Reeds.

The stately organ pipes, o'erlaid with gold,
Look down on reverent worshipers, while floats
Aloft the sweet-toned prelude, and the notes
Of the grand psalm through nave and arch are rolled.
Within, concealed where none may them behold,
Vibrate the delicate and birdlike throats
Of reeds, which no bright paint nor gilding coats,
Yet theirs the tones most sweet and manifold.

Where Time's great organ stands in spaces dim,
God sets some lives to shine and some to hide.
But in the darkened chamber where they bide
The hidden reeds breathe sweetest praise to Him—
Aye, tenderest lyrics for the sorrow-tried,
And rapture like the joy of seraphim.

Childishness.

O GRACIOUS Father! pity these our ways,
Our childish ways and thoughts! Here at Thy feet
Like babes we stand,
Loving Thee with a love not yet complete,
So easily offended, sensitive,
Yet unto Thee, like child's-love, very sweet,
The pearl of all that we can give
Into Thy hand.
Better, perhaps, our love should not be wise!
Thou seest us through and through
With Thy so pitiful and tender eyes,
And smilest, as we do
On children, loving them the more
For sweet allowances made o'er and o'er.

The Better Way.

I THINK there 's blindness in the way we seek,
Sometimes, to help each other here on earth:
Too oft the poor, conforming word we speak,
Too much we praise the dubious deed and worth.

Oh! for that courage and that better love
Which so applies truth's brave and wholesome test
That men are helped to rise themselves above,
And so by steps ascending reach their best.

Leave feeble charities of speech unsaid!
They add not truly to thy brother's weal.
But do thou kindle stars above his head,
And wake in him betimes a loftier zeal.

Via Sacra.

Dear Pilgrim, when the thorns thy forehead press,
And when the cross smites down with heaviness,
Oh! think of Him who first this pathway trod
And made it blessèd to the sons of God!

An Unselfish Life.

Her days with kindly deeds were rife.
She yearned o'er every troubled one,
And counted it the joy of life
To ease a sorrow 'neath the sun.

Such lives make living nobler far,
A foretaste of the life above.
They prove what angels mortals are
When self surrenders all to love.

Utterance.

Past is the prophet-age of power?
Nay! truth unfolds like leaf or flower,
And oft through humblest instrument
Are God's new revelations sent.

If any word Thou sendest me,
Lord, let me speak it clear for Thee.
E'en such as I may not withhold
His grain of truth's unminted gold.

This Day.

FATHER, help me on my way,
Day by day!
Not too far I 'd look ahead;
Brief and plain the path I tread;
Give me daily strength and bread—
Thus I 'll pray.

Just this day in all I do
To be true!
Little loaf takes little leaven—
Duty for this day, not seven,
That is all of earth and heaven,
If we knew!

Ah, how needlessly we gaze
Down the days,
Troubled for next week, next year,
Overlooking now and here!
"Heart, the only sure is near,"
Wisdom says.

Step by step, and day by day,
All the way!
So the pilgrim soul wins through,
Finds each morn the strength to do
All God asks of me or you—
This: obey.

A Robin's Egg.

Only think of it—love and song,
The passionate joy of the summer long,
Matins and vespers, ah! how sweet,
A nest to be in the village street,
A red breast flashing in happy flight,
Life's full ecstasy and delight
Thrilling God's minstrel through and through—
All of them packed in this egg of blue!

Would you believe it, holding dumb
Lime and pigment 'twixt finger and thumb?
Would you think there was love within
Walls so brittle and cold and thin?
Such a song as you heard, last night,
Thrilling the grove in the sunset light?

Out of the casket in which we dwell
What may issue?—can you foretell?
Can you say, when you find outspread
Bits of our eggshell, we are dead?
Can you think, if this shell be crushed,
All that was in it is cold and hushed?
Look once more at this bit of blue,—
Has it no message of hope for you?

The City of Rest.

In love was it founded and pity,
That home at the heart of the grasses,
Where sleep never wearies nor passes,
But lies with God's peace in his breast,—
In love for the spent and the dying,
In pity for sorrow and sighing,
A home for the homeless, a city,
A welcoming city, of rest.

There never a trouble shall find them;
There, under God's dew and man's weeping,
The sick and the weary are sleeping,
Nor burdened, nor worn, nor distressed.
The earth folds them close, like a mother,
And none is more dear than another,
For God in His love has assigned them
One home in the city of rest.

They sleep, but their eyes are not holden.
They joy in the daisies and clover.
Yea, when the loved faces bend over,
They smile, knowing silence is best.
They see nature's beauty and splendor,
They hear all the bird-music tender;—
Ah! rose-lit the windows and golden
That look from the city of rest.

'T is sweet at the last, when God calls us,
To go to the city of slumber.
Oh! think of the infinite number
To whom that long surcease is blest!
Release from the ache and the sorrow,
No slaving to-day or to-morrow—
Ah! call it not death that befalls us,
But peace, in the city of rest!

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